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New York

President:	Ms. Løj	(Denmark)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mrs. Itoua Apoyola
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Telalian
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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06-40877 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Uganda, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Egeland: There are signs of progress in our work to better protect civilians caught in conflict. First, while there are more than 20 million displaced persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worldwide, the High Commissioner documents that the overall number of refugees fell to 8.4 million in 2005 — the lowest figure since the 1960s and half the number of a decade ago. Secondly, in a number of countries, including in southern Sudan and Burundi, the prospects for return for the displaced are improving — a positive development. Thirdly, with the reduction in the number of armed conflicts, according to the *Human Security Report*, most of us are living in a safer world. Conflicts have been resolved and displacement brought to an end in, for example, Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Our collective efforts are having an impact: more systematic engagement by the Security Council in more crisis areas, more comprehensive peacekeeping, an enhanced humanitarian response and more mediation and effective judicial recourse offered in more places have contributed to stronger protection and the reduction of conflict-related civilian deaths. Where there is concerted, coherent and systematic international action and strong positive political engagement from the parties to conflicts, we can — and we will — make significant progress.

The recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, is fundamental to this progress. It represents a strengthening of the earlier resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000). Together, they provide a principled framework to ensure better protection for all civilians in situations of conflict. The new resolution details how peacekeeping missions can better provide physical protection for civilians. However, it still fails to ensure a predictable response to the massive suffering of vulnerable civilians.

We, as the United Nations, and the Security Council specifically, now have the responsibility to protect, as reaffirmed in resolution 1674 (2006). There are too many times when we still do not come to the defence of civilian populations in need. When our response is weak, we appear to wash our hands of our humanitarian responsibilities to protect lives. The world is, indeed, a safer place for most of us, but it is still a death trap for too many defenceless civilians — men, women and children.

In Iraq, the Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, civilians continue to bear the full brunt of armed conflict and terror. Despite all our efforts, women are still raped

and violated as a matter of course, children are still forcibly recruited and defenceless civilians continue to be killed — in violation of the most basic principles enshrined in centuries of international law-making.

In the time that we take today to debate how best to protect civilians, dozens will have died from the direct, blunt and brutal violence of conflict in just the six crisis situations that I mentioned earlier.

At the end of June, President Karzai stated that up to 800 civilians had been killed in Afghanistan in recent weeks. Indicators suggest that with central authorities being unable to provide security in 80 per cent of Afghan territory, the security situation may worsen further. In Somalia, the prognosis is equally bleak. In the past four months, 500 people have been killed, 2,000 have been injured and an estimated 18,000 have been displaced as a result of the fighting in Mogadishu alone. Urgent political action is required to stop that country, already ravaged by war, from spiralling further back into chaos. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, figures are worse still, with daily reports of massacres, rapes and scores of children dying from disease and neglect associated with the conflict.

In Darfur, the African Union reports that 69 people were killed in the month immediately following the signing of the Darfur peace accord. We know that the real figures are much higher and that general mortality is once again on the rise among the hundreds and thousands of people in Darfur to whom there is limited or no humanitarian access.

However, it appears that it is in Iraq that the greatest numbers of civilians are being killed by indiscriminate acts of terror and sectarian and conflict-related violence. The figures vary and are controversial, but those quoted by Iraqi Government sources are staggering. Official Iraqi Health Ministry figures from the main mortuary in Baghdad reveal that the mortuary has received over 6,000 bodies of Iraqis killed since the beginning of the year. Those figures represent a worsening trend since President Bush delivered his address to the World Affairs Council in December 2005 and estimated that over 30,000 civilians had been killed between March 2003 and the end of 2005.

Whatever caveats are applied to those figures, the undeniable truth is shocking: scores of defenceless civilians are continuing to be intentionally and brutally killed on a daily basis, mostly in indiscriminate sectarian violence and terror, but also as victims of combat operations. With the targeting of mosques, school buses and markets, no one is immune. Neither the national authorities nor the massive international involvement have been so far able to effectively protect the civilian population.

Currently, there is no humanitarian crisis in Iraq, as many had predicted. There would be. For the most part, provincial health structures, water and sanitation, food supply and social services are functioning. However, in the past six months alone, 110,000 people have been displaced by violence, with the numbers continuing to rise. The failure to address that displacement will result in growing humanitarian needs.

In certain African countries the situation is far more precarious, from a humanitarian perspective. Conflict has decimated whatever fragile infrastructure was in place, and people have become infinitely more vulnerable. As a result, civilians die in exponentially larger numbers from the associated disease and malnutrition than from the violence itself. Mortality studies undertaken by the United Nations and the International Rescue Committee in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda exemplify that toll. It is estimated that up to 1,200 people are dying in silence every day in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The mortality rate of 1.54 per 10,000 people per day in northern Uganda not only exceeds emergency thresholds but is greater even than that for Darfur last year.

In Darfur and in eastern Chad, attacks against civilians continue to be undertaken by the Janjaweed, other militia groups, elements of the Sudan Liberation Army and Government forces. In late May, militia attacks around Mukjar, in West Darfur, killed over 25 civilians, displacing scores more. In North Darfur, intra-rebel fighting prior to, and after, the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement has displaced thousands and has included horrific acts of violence. Janjaweed incursions moving further into Chad have brought with them fear and have significantly threatened the civilian nature of refugee camps. Between 12 and 14 April, 118 people were shot or brutally hacked to death in a massacre in Djawara and three other villages 70 kilometres east of the Sudanese border. Recent analysis from human rights colleagues of the United Nations mission indicates that this may be the beginning of a

new phase of violence in which armed groups, militias, rebel groups and the army are intensifying their targeting of civilian populations.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, serious attempts are being made to stem the violence and address impunity, with the surrender and imprisonment of prominent Mai-Mai and armed group leaders and the International Criminal Court's indictment of a former commander of the Union des patriotes congolais for human rights violations. But in a context where hundreds of thousands of civilians continue to suffer from ongoing violence in areas such as Katanga, Ituri and the Kivus, the impact of those actions is limited. Nearly all serious violations committed against the civilian population by all parties still go unchecked.

A key question is how we can we make the recently adopted resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians, offer a real platform for action. Protection has been made a central responsibility of peacekeeping mandates. That commitment acknowledges that it is by how well the United Nations protects that our missions will be judged.

The Security Council has created a range of protection tools to place at its disposal. These must be used more effectively. The Council's presidential statement of June 2005 (S/PRST/2005/25) rightly expressed grave concern over the limited progress to ensure the effective protection of civilians in many situations of armed conflict. It stressed the urgent need to provide better physical protection and underscored that the establishment of a secure environment for all vulnerable populations should be a key objective of peacekeeping operations.

States have the primary responsibility for the protection of their own people. But in the case of armed conflict within their own territories, they all too often lack the capacity and the will to do so. The humanitarian community helps create an environment where will and capacity can be re-established or recreated. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue has shown that a humanitarian presence can have some beneficial effect, deterring violence. However, let us be honest: a humanitarian presence has limitations. In many situations, such as in today's eastern Chad, security is so precarious that civilians, and often humanitarian staff, need physical protection, which today is virtually non-existent. That is where the role of the Security Council in defining and facilitating the role and capacity of peacekeepers is so crucial.

First, peacekeeping missions must be equipped with better and more comprehensive mandates and the means to fulfil them. In two round table consultations that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has held with Council members, other Member States, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and agency colleagues, we examined the implementation of protection mandates of the peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire. From those consultations it is clear that our people on the ground are too often ill-equipped to fulfil their duty to protect. Realistic and well-designed mandates for missions and practical support for their implementation are fundamental to the effectiveness of their efforts. In 2002, the Council adopted the aide memoire (S/PRST/2002/6, annex) to assist in the process of formulating peacekeeping mandates to properly address protection needs. It is now time for that vital tool to be reviewed and updated and put to better use. My Office stands ready to support that process.

Secondly, new creative approaches to peacekeeping are required, and the composition of missions must be amended. Instead of being adapted to allow for a flexible response to emerging threats, new tasks are often simply added on to old ones. In Côte d'Ivoire, new threats for civilians have emerged, with groups like the Jeunes patriotes using street violence and criminality to advance their agenda. Soldiers are not trained to meet those challenges. Recent reinforcements authorized by the Council for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) that include additional formed police units are most important. The round table consultations also highlighted the difficulties of interpreting imminent threats of violence on the ground. Peacekeepers must be given tools, guidance and support if they are to respond to those threats and provide better protection.

Humanitarian access is the first stepping stone to the protection of civilians. The Security Council must make every effort to ensure that access is granted and respected. By not responding more forcefully in cases where that access has been unreasonably denied, we risk placing humanitarian personnel in jeopardy, further exposing them to possible attack. Humanitarian workers remain at considerable risk to violence. In Afghanistan alone, 24 humanitarian colleagues have

been killed since the beginning of the year, including four working with Action Aid who were summarily shot in the head by the roadside in Jawzjan less than a month ago. On the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, restrictions on access for humanitarian goods and supplies, coupled with limitations on the movement of United Nations and humanitarian personnel, continue to pose severe problems for humanitarian agencies operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

One of the most important tools at our disposal is conflict mediation and the timely and effective use of good offices. A number of violent crises highlight the grave cost in human lives of inadequate timely mediation. That situation also underscores the fact that conflict can only ever be resolved at the political level. International protection, whether by peacekeepers or humanitarians, can only ever be an interim response — a band-aid. Without political solutions, tragically, civilians continue to suffer and the humanitarians are left to deal with intractable conflict and open-ended displacement.

We must activate, strengthen and resource the Secretary-General's good offices more often and earlier, seize every opportunity for mediation and speak out when political solutions are needed. The appropriate space and channels for that to work need to be created and better individual training provided. I welcome the opportunity to take these discussions forward with the Department of Political Affairs to strengthen mediation capacity in the field.

Targeted sanctions and embargoes are also yet to be used optimally, despite our efforts to develop guidance for their effective use. Targeted sanctions should be employed at the earliest opportunity where violations against civilians prevail to signal our concern and serve as a first step to protect. I would have hoped that the sanctions Committee had been more consistent, for example, in the case of Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere, where we have seen deliberate attacks on civilians, as well as on United Nations personnel and assets. In Côte d'Ivoire, individual sanctions levied against three members of the Jeunes Patriotes and the Forces nouvelles did have an immediate ameliorative effect. But why did we stop there? Why, for example, has no action been taken by the Security Council or by the national authorities against those publicly and loudly responsible for Radio Guiglo, which inspired and directed mob violence against civilians and humanitarian organizations in January? And why are we not using sanctions strategically in other crises? And where embargoes are in place, but are violated, why is stronger action not being taken? For example, the report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia has documented daily arms shipments to militias and warlords that fuelled the fighting which then engulfed the only two hospitals in Mogadishu.

Protection is a collective responsibility. To strengthen protection response, we in the Secretariat have our own responsibilities to fulfil. We need to work with the Security Council to ensure better provision of information, strengthened analysis and comprehensive planning of our protection response. The mechanism that has been established through Council resolution 1612 (2005) to monitor and report on the impact of armed conflict on children is already showing some results. Work is in progress to ensure that a reporting mechanism on broader protection concerns is dovetailed with that initiative. Agency colleagues are working together to build on the methodologies and practice already developed, and pilot protection monitoring mechanisms have been established in Darfur, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Better methods of analysis are also needed to ensure that local populations are included as a crucial element in our decision-making processes. The perceptions of the local population are critical to understanding where risks lie.

Joint planning is also essential. In the mission planning for Darfur, DPKO, OCHA and other key United Nations actors have worked in close collaboration to ensure better provision for the protection of civilians. That should set the standard. In general, integration is most effective where it is formulated around a common objective, such as protection. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo serves as a positive example of that. In Côte d'Ivoire, similar initiatives are now being taken where an expanded inter-agency committee has been created that brings humanitarians together with key actors from the peacekeeping mission to work collaboratively to provide protection. In Uganda, where there is no peacekeeping presence, OCHA and DPKO are starting to work with the Ugandan security forces to facilitate civil-military relations and strengthen the capacity of national security forces to provide protection.

Those actions will have limited impact if we fail to address the need to uphold and respect the universal values enshrined in the tenets and rules of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The new Human Rights Council is a welcome addition to the international architecture to safeguard the rule of law, but if we are unable to fulfil our responsibilities or enforce the legal frameworks that we have created, and impunity prevails unchallenged, we will consistently fail to protect civilians caught in conflict.

Such protection must be provided consistently and without prejudice. We grapple, in particular, with how to meet the specific protection and assistance needs of indigenous groups and ethnic minorities, which are amongst those at greatest risk. The situation faced by ethnic minorities in Colombia is one case among many that illustrates that challenge. Indigenous people and Afro-Colombians are increasingly under pressure from illegal armed groups. Minority leaders are victims of forced abduction, torture and assassination. Several hundred persons from indigenous communities have been assassinated, mostly by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrillas and paramilitary groups. Children are forcibly recruited by the armed groups, and women and young girls raped. Many are forced from their ancestral lands and reduced to begging in urban slums, which is slowly eroding their traditions and culture. A dozen indigenous communities are on the verge of extinction. We cannot stand by as passive witnesses to the loss of life and the loss of cultures.

In conclusion, I sincerely believe that progress to ensure better protection for civilians has been made — just not enough. The numbers of innocent civilians who continue to be killed and live with the constant threat of violence are unacceptable. We must work together, at all levels and using every tool at our disposal, to provide adequate protection for those living in the midst of conflict around the world.

There is much at stake. In these dangerous and polarized times, it could not be more important to reaffirm the rule of law, which lies at the heart of the protection agenda. Where we fail, countries emerging from crisis are at serious risk of spiralling back into conflict, as the current situations in Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka make clear. Together with my humanitarian colleagues, I stand ready to continue to work with you and Member States towards the creation of a real culture of protection and a safer world for all.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. In the light of the many speakers at this afternoon's session, I urgently appeal to all members of the Council as well as representatives of non-members alike to make a special effort to limit their verbal statements to no more than five minutes.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing and to align myself with the statement to be made shortly by the Austrian ambassador on behalf of the European Union.

Efforts to protect civilians from the effect of armed conflict must be at the heart of our work in this Council. How many people noticed the number of occasions when Mr. Egeland said "must", "we have to", "we should"? The sense of imperative implicit in the scale of the challenge that we confront and in the urgency of action is all too obvious. He listed some of the more obvious blights on human security which exist in the world. That is why the Council reaffirmed in resolution 1674 (2006) that we have a shared responsibility to protect populations from large scale abuses and, in particular, from crimes against humanity, including the prospect of genocide. That is why today's debate is an important opportunity to try to demonstrate how we can do better at implementing that key resolution.

I want to set out, if I may, three areas of discussion. Of primary importance is the need for more effective efforts to prevent conflict. Secondly, we must address the action to bring those responsible for abuses against civilians to justice. Thirdly, we must discuss the role of peacekeeping missions in providing protection. Underpinning all of these matters is the importance of effective coordination.

Preventing the occurrence of armed conflict should always be a prime consideration for the Council. That was recognized in the outcome document of the Summit last September, where we stressed the

obligation of the United Nations to play its part and the primary responsibility of States to protect their own citizens. The Security Council has a role in endorsing and supporting that approach, which is set out in resolutions 1625 (2005) and 1653 (2006), as well as resolution 1674 (2006). That activity needs to be underpinned by a clear analysis and identification of flashpoints for potential conflict at an early stage. One of the crucial indicators in that regard is the way in which civilians are exposed to lawlessness and violence. In that regard, these humanitarian briefings, which have now become established by the Under-Secretary-General, are quite crucial. Protection of civilians should be an important element of what is set out before us on each occasion.

Where conflict does occur, we need to make certain that the United Nations takes a lead in ensuring that the perpetrators of abuses against civilians are brought to justice. That is why the language in resolution 1674 (2006) about ending impunity was so important. Such language was essential, not just for reasons of natural justice, but because ending impunity is an indispensable part of helping societies to recover from the scars of conflict. Action against impunity promotes sustainable peace as well as truth and reconciliation. The need for the United Nations family as a whole to provide political and practical support to efforts to end impunity is very important.

I think it is also important for the Security Council, in adopting mandates for peacekeeping operations, to consider the extent to which the mandate should cover the collection and protection of evidence and, indeed, any special training necessary to investigate and prosecute crimes of that nature. That goes beyond customary mandates, but I think we need to think seriously about it.

The United Nations system also has a role in direct provision of protection to civilians where their own Governments are failing to do so. Humanitarian agencies' efforts in places like Darfur and Northern Uganda are essential to provide the basic human security needs of hundreds of thousands or even millions of the most vulnerable. Where the Council has mandated peacekeeping operations, there may also be a direct security role for the United Nations or for relevant regional organizations. Resolution 1674 (2006) recognizes that there is more work to be done to ensure that peacekeeping missions are able to discharge that responsibility as effectively as possible within resources.

Speaking bluntly, I would say that, politically and practically, we cannot deploy a United Nations mission to Darfur, unless we actually tackle and provide protection for civilians. That is a need identified in the Darfur peace agreement, but unless we do that, there is little point, in my view, in deploying a mission to Darfur.

One area particularly highlighted in resolution 1674 (2006) is the need to ensure effective security in and around camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. I will not elaborate on that point, but we all know exactly why that is essential. Where peacekeepers have a protection role, there is a need to ensure that they are appropriately tasked, adequately equipped and well-trained. The Council's responsibility is to ensure that we clearly understand the tasks that we are assigning, including those related to the protection of civilians, and that we then follow that through in the mandate and in the resources allocated for those operations.

I would like to say a few words about the particular importance of preventing sexual violence as an element of our work on protection. The scale of this problem is horrifying. For example, the International Red Cross has recently estimated that 60 to 70 per cent of all women in the camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur have suffered gender-based violence. There are many instances of conflict where rape of civilians has been used as a deliberate weapon by armed groups. Action to tackle this problem should form a key part of the agenda on protection of civilians. However, it requires not just direct action to protect women and girls and to bring perpetrators to justice, but also serious efforts to address the cultural climate in which the use of rape as a weapon of war can be and often is commonplace.

Ensuring that gender issues have an important role in United Nations missions is a starting point. But we have to be quite clear: all of us have to redouble the aggregate effort to promote women's decision-making role in society, and in peace and security issues in particular, as was set out in resolution 1325 (2000) of this Council. The implementation of that key resolution has to be at the forefront.

Providing adequate protection is a daunting task. It is a task that needs the closest possible coordination

to be effective. The United Nations should continue to strengthen its efforts through partnerships and throughout its own direct action. However, let us remember that non-governmental organizations often play a central role. It is vital that their knowledge and contributions are factored into our discussion of protection issues.

There are, of course, many other areas worthy of specific mention in a debate such as this one. In the interests of time, however, let me conclude by saying that if our efforts are to be successful, we need to recognize the importance of a coherent, unified approach by the Council, by the Secretariat and the agencies of the United Nations, and within the Department of Peacekeeping, and in all our peacekeeping operations. We also need to recognize that that should come through in individual theatres of action. The needs — which we have heard set out — and the imperative nature of the action required demonstrate why we really must do better.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): I would like first to express the gratitude of my delegation to Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his valuable briefing today, and to the Danish presidency for organizing this important discussion on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement to be delivered later this afternoon by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome the continuing efforts of the Security Council, and of the whole international community, in strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Security Council resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000) comprise a significant milestone and reflect the growing commitment of the international community to better address the tragic plight of civilians trapped in situations of armed conflict.

The adoption of the latest resolution on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, resolution 1674 (2006), following the submission of the report of the Secretary-General of 28 November 2005 (S/2005/740), not only showed the urgency of the problem, but, while reaffirming the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, it also identified measures and actions the Security Council might take in order to make the response to the need of civilians in armed conflict more effective.

Despite the increasing attention paid by th Security Council and the international community the protection of civilians in armed conflict, we sti witness, in conflict regions, the killing of civilian sexual violence, attacks motivated by ethnic an religious hatred or political confrontation and othe grave violations of international humanitarian law an human rights. In that regard, let me highlight th situation in Darfur, where we have experienced one o the greatest crises of protection, as described precisely by Mr. Egeland and as the Security Counc mission itself witnessed in Darfur and eastern Cha earlier this month. The civilian population has bee subjected to forced displacement on an unprecedente scale: there have been about 2 million internall displaced persons, as well as widespread physical an sexual violence. In that context we welcome th progress made by the Prosecutor of the Internation Criminal Court (ICC) who, despite lasting insecurity i the region, continues to take steps to investigate th situation referred to him by the Security Council.

With regard to the special attention devoted to th protection of children, we would appreciate the curre work of the International Criminal Court and the recen arrest of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a Congolese nationa and a leader of the Union des patriotes congola alleged to have committed war crimes, in particul conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 1 and using them to participate actively in hostilities.

It is imperative that grave violations of huma rights, international humanitarian law and othe relevant provisions of international law be investigate in a timely and credible manner, and that perpetrato of the worst crimes under international law b prosecuted and brought to justice.

At this point, we would like also to emphasize deterrent effect upon possible perpetrators of suc crimes and the contributions made by the ICC-relate investigations I have mentioned to prevention, the figh against impunity, the restoration of the rule of law an the establishment of a secure and safe environment.

With regard to ending impunity for perpetrato of the worst crimes under international law, we woul like to note, in a general context, other appropriat means within the broader range of justice an reconciliation mechanisms, including nationa

international and mixed criminal courts and tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions. We call on all States that have not yet done so to consider ratification of the instruments of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. We consider it alarming that, out of 26 countries in which a total of 30 armed conflicts occurred in 2004, only 13 are parties to the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, regulating internal armed conflicts. Serious gaps remain in the implementation of legal documents by which those States are already bound. Therefore, we call upon all Member States to further enhance the legal framework concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflicts in their domestic legal systems.

Also, we appeal to all parties to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel to fulfil their obligations arising from that international instrument, in particular to allow access to humanitarian assistance and to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associate personnel.

Finally, with the aim of improving the protectional capacity of peacekeeping operations, we should consider a request for information on the on-the-ground implementation of provisions of resolution 1674 (2006) to be included in all reports of the Secretary-General on United Nations country operations. In our view, that would help us to better tune protection mandates in order to have more professional and responsible security forces capable of providing adequate protection to civilians. We should focus our endeavours on long-term security-sector reform and reform of the judiciary. That task should be among the priorities of United Nations country teams, host Governments and donors.

We are aware of the strengthened role of regional organizations and other intergovernmental institutions, which have an increasing valuable role in the protection of civilians. In our view, enhanced, closer cooperation between the United Nations and Member States and regional organizations such as the African Union should be developed, since regional organizations can often provide their own experience to effectively address protection concerns.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing. We appreciate the enormous efforts made by the United Nations agencies over the years in the field of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

In recent years, the Security Council has paid increasing attention to the protection of civilians, and many resolutions and presidential statements have been adopted on that theme. A legal framework on the issue has been established that sets out specific requirements with regard to the actions of the parties concerned. The recently adopted Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) sets out the latest provisions guiding activities in this field. However, against the backdrop of a harsh reality, such achievements on paper are far from sufficient. It is imperative that they be implemented.

Here, I would like to briefly emphasize the following points. First, efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict must not deviate from the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the provisions of relevant international law. The primary responsibility to protect civilians lies, first, with the Governments concerned. The international community and other parties, while providing support and assistance, should not undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned.

Humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations have often provided assistance in extremely dangerous conditions and should be highly commended. However, at the same time, they should strictly abide by the principles of justice, neutrality, objectivity and independence in their activities in order to avoid becoming involved in internal disputes and complicating the security situation and the political process on the ground.

Secondly, the Security Council, when it carries out its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security, should strengthen its efforts to prevent or resolve armed conflict and address the issue of protecting civilians by addressing the root causes. Civilians, particularly those belonging to vulnerable groups, always bear the brunt of conflict. When faced with a sudden eruption of violence and conflict, they have no guarantee of safety or dignity. In addition, it is difficult to ensure that remedial measures are immediately effective. It is only by addressing the root causes of armed conflicts that we can create better living conditions for civilians. The recently established

Peacebuilding Commission can play a special role in that area.

Thirdly, resolution 1674 (2006) reaffirmed a principle expressed in the outcome document of last year's summit (General Assembly resolution 60/1): the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. China believes that that is not the same as the simple concept of the responsibility to protect, about which many countries continue to have concerns. The outcome document elaborated extensively on that concept. In-depth discussion of the issue should continue in the General Assembly so that differing opinions can be heard and doubts cleared up. In that role, the Security Council cannot and should not replace the General Assembly.

Finally, we hope that our work on the protection of civilians in armed conflict will be based on resolutions such as resolution 1674 (2006), take into account the specific characteristics and circumstances of each conflict and seek to gradually achieve fruitful results in the implementation of those resolutions on the ground.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): First, our appreciation goes to Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his timely briefing on the progress made and the challenges remaining in the protection of civilians in armed conflicts around the world. In addition, our deep respect goes to all peacekeepers, to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to humanitarian agencies and their workers and to all other actors striving to assist people in need and to protect those at risk, sometimes even risking their own lives.

During the six years since the introduction of the protection agenda in the Security Council, in 1999, considerable progress has been made in establishing a framework of protection. That includes three Security Council resolutions — including resolution 1674 (2006), adopted this April — several presidential statements and an aide-mémoire. Resolution 1674 (2006) is a cornerstone in the establishment of guidelines for action by the Security Council.

While there is still room for further work on the general framework of protection, it is clear that further and closer attention should now be paid — as suggested in the President's discussion paper — to the question of how we can ensure its steady implementation. Resolution 1674 (2006) and other framework documents have real value only when protection objectives, principles and guidelines are actually translated into action. That is the challenge we face at present, as Under-Secretary-General Egeland also emphasized.

In that regard, the Government of Canada has taken an excellent initiative to help OCHA organize a series of round tables focusing on how the protection of civilians is implemented on the ground with respect to specific peacekeeping missions. Thus, a round-table event was held in November last year that reviewed the implementation of the protection mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

As the second in the series, another round table was held last month to examine the implementation of the protection elements of the peacekeeping mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Japan was pleased to host the round table, along with Canada. The findings and recommendations from that meeting, drawn from daily protection activities, provide valuable insights into problems and challenges encountered in the implementation of protection mandates, particularly in UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire, but also and more generally in peacekeeping missions elsewhere. They are available in the report on the round tables prepared by OCHA.

Let me touch upon three of these findings which we find to be particularly relevant, together with our own suggestions.

First, it was pointed out that the wide range of actors involved in the protection of civilians need to have a clear understanding of their respective responsibilities and of the division of labour. The national Government, civil society, the peacekeeping mission and humanitarian actors all have important roles to play in ensuring the safety of the population. The aide-mémoire endorsed by the Security Council in 2002 (S/2002/PRST/6, annex) established key areas of protection activity. That was an important step forward, but it demands further precision and clarity as to who should perform each protection-related activity.

To address that issue, it would be worthwhile to develop a matrix outlining who should make efforts in which area of protection activity, in order to help identify the roles of the respective actors involved.

Preferably, such a matrix, if it is to be realistic, would include a time frame for the respective actors to begin their activities and phase them out as the situation allows. It could be conceived and prepared as a model under the joint initiative of OCHA and DPKO, in consultation with other relevant departments, agencies and actors. Such a model, once developed, would need to be constantly modified and adapted in accordance with specific cases, particularly with the engagement of national Governments and of the civil society of the State in which peacekeeping missions are deployed. This exercise could involve complex and difficult tasks, but the process itself could contribute to a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the respective actors.

Secondly, in the round tables, the need to establish an effective information-gathering and information-sharing system involving humanitarian actors and non-governmental organizations was emphasized as an important and urgent requirement. The planning of protection activities requires timely and accurate information about situations in which civilians are caught and need protection. Often, non-governmental organizations deployed on the ground, through their far-reaching assistance activities, obtain first-hand information on the threat posed to civilians. However, in the development of an effective system for the gathering and sharing of information, caution must be excercised to ensure that a clear distinction is maintained between the activities of humanitarian non-governmental organizations and the efforts of peacekeepers to facilitate humanitarian activities, so as not to undermine the neutrality and independence of humanitarian activities. While bearing that in mind, we believe that there is room to develop some kind of cooperation on an information system. To that end, dialogue with non-governmental organizations needs to be intensified.

Thirdly and finally, round table participants noted that when a peacekeeping mission has a protection mandate, the mandate is often interpreted differently by battalions drawn from different countries. That gives rise on occasion to implementation problems. For example, Council resolutions sometimes authorize a protection mandate for civilians under imminent threat, but there is a lack of clarity as to what sort of situation constitutes an imminent threat. Can a situation of political tension, in which protesting crowds are likely to lead to violence and in which civilians are likely to be subjected to attack in an atmosphere of turmoil, be regarded as constituting an imminent threat? While the Security Council must make sure that it gives clear mandates to peacekeeping operations, we must bear in mind that even such mandates are likely to be still subject to interpretation when translated into action on the ground.

We believe that, to help address the problem, practical guidance on the day-to-day activities of peacekeeping troops would be worth developing in the Secretariat, based on best practices. Such guidelines would in turn also be helpful for the Security Council in discussing the mandates of peacekeeping missions.

Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) marked a major achievement in our normative discussions. It is now time to develop practical arrangements and devise pragmatic measures to translate the terms of the resolution into action. Practical arrangements and measures may, in some sense, sound too technical, but we should pay due attention to them, as they make a difference on the ground. We hope that, by the time the Secretary-General's next report is out, in October 2007, specific progress in practical terms will have been made to strengthen our protection efforts.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): Allow me to express my delegation's sincere thanks to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his comprehensive briefing.

In the context of its consideration of the tragic plight of civilians trapped in armed conflict, the Security Council has worked assiduously to counter such gross violations as genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse. Indeed, the adoption of resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006) demonstrates the Council's determination to take appropriate measures to combat this menace.

It has generally been recognized, and rightly so, that the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians in armed conflict rests with their Governments. According to the tenets of international humanitarian law and to the resolutions of the Security Council, that responsibility has also been extended to non-State actors, especially belligerent groups involved in conflicts.

Despite the Security Council's commitment to this cause, the incidence of gross violations of the

fundamental rights of civilians in armed conflict has not abated, as evidenced by the atrocities they continue to suffer. Regrettably, the majority of the victims are women and children, whose contributions to nation-building are crucial. Invariably, they suffer the worst consequences of such inhumane actions, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse, forced recruitment into armed groups, displacement from their homes and separation from their families, as has been the case in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Somalia.

It is against this background that my delegation considers this debate as timely and opportune, since, in our view, it facilitates the Security Council's formulation of more concrete, realistic and achievable measures aimed at realizing the underlying objectives that informed the adoption of its various resolutions on this issue. We need hardly remind ourselves that the Security Council's efforts should be measured not by eloquent statements and declarations, but by the extent to which its actions address effectively violations of international humanitarian law and of the human rights of victims in armed conflict.

The fundamental question, therefore, is how to ensure that both Governments and armed groups uphold the provisions enshrined in international humanitarian law in respect of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Based on my Government's firm conviction of the importance of human rights, we hold the view that, in the event of failure by Governments and armed groups to abide by their commitments under international humanitarian law, conventions and agreements, it behoves the United Nations to intervene and protect innocent populations against such crimes as genocide, ethnic cleansing and other gross human rights violations.

In that connection, we welcome the recent measures taken by the Security Council to strengthen the role of the United Nations to that end, as witnessed during the operation of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Such robust measures clearly demonstrate to other belligerents the resolve of the United Nations to prevent them from engaging in nefarious activities and undoubtedly deter infringement of civilian rights in conflict areas.

With the support of the international community, the International Criminal Court could contribute immensely towards containing and combating crimes against innocent populations in conflict areas. Indicted persons seeking sanctuary in various countries must be apprehended and handed over to the International Criminal Court for prosecution. The arrest and handing over of the former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, to the Special Court of Sierra Leone is worthy of emulation.

Given the pivotal role of the United Nations in the provision of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and other victims of war whose predicament is intolerable and dehumanizing, the Security Council should consider strengthening the role of United Nations peacekeepers to enable them to discharge their cardinal and onerous responsibility to ensure that humanitarian agencies provide the requisite assistance and services in a safe and secure environment.

Our common objective to combat such reprehensible acts by callous and unprincipled persons will remain elusive unless we strive to attain the universality of all relevant international legal instruments relating to humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their protocols. Undoubtedly, the United Nations has, since its establishment almost 61 years ago, been regarded as a beacon of hope for the unfortunate victims of war, and it should be seen to be discharging, in a consistent manner, its duties in this regard if we are to abide by our commitments under the Charter.

Mrs. Taj (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation wishes to thank Mr. Jan Egeland for his comprehensive briefing.

This meeting provides another forum for us to assess the progress made by the United Nations and its organs in instilling within the international community a culture of protecting civilians in armed conflict.

My delegation notes with great concern that today's armed conflicts are characterized by the active and deliberate targeting of civilians. Widespread human rights abuses and the use of rape and other crimes of sexual violence as brutal weapons of war, particularly against women and children, are causing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

We condemn in the strongest terms all acts of violence and abuses committed against civilians in situations of armed conflict, in particular torture and other prohibited treatment, gender-based and sexual violence, violence against children, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, trafficking in humans, forced displacement and the intentional denial of humanitarian assistance. We demand that all those responsible put an end to such practices.

It is gratifying to see that the United Nations has consistently spared no effort to end conflicts and build sustainable peace. My delegation supports the United Nations in its endeavours to dedicate greater attention to protecting civilians in ongoing armed conflicts in Africa and in other parts of the world.

Resolution 1674 (2006), adopted by the Security Council in April 2006, was an important achievement and was in line with the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. The resolution stresses the protection and assistance needs of all affected civilian populations and reaffirms the provisions of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Outcome Document regarding the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

It is worth stressing here the fact that appropriate measures to protect civilians threatened by armed conflict should go beyond statements of intent or expressions of concern. Meaningful and practical protection should be based on appropriate and effective action. In that context, we urge Member States and international organizations, armed groups, the private sector and other non-State actors to live up to their responsibilities and continue to display the necessary commitment to ensure decisive and rapid action to move war-torn societies from vulnerability to security and from war to peace.

We recognize that appropriate protection measures depend on the circumstances and stages of a particular conflict. At the same time, however, we must insist that regardless of circumstances, Governments, armed groups and the humanitarian community should protect each and every civilian within their jurisdiction, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or political conviction.

In conclusion, we welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his report on combating the illicit trade in small arms and those in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on combating acts of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by peacekeepers, in tandem with a zero-tolerance policy.

We call on all Member States and troop-contributing countries to cooperate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in effectively implementing a zero-tolerance policy in all peacekeeping missions.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like, first of all, to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing today.

Throughout history, humankind has suffered enormously as a result of armed conflict. Recent years have seen an increase in armed conflict in various parts of the world, as well as a notable change in the nature of such conflicts. Urban areas have been transformed into battlefields in the context of internal conflicts and civil wars, leading to an increase in the number of civilian victims. Increasingly, children and young people are suffering as a result of armed conflict.

Armed conflicts can spiral out of control. Civilians are no longer safe, and can be injured as a result of combat that takes place in their vicinity. Not only are they injured accidentally, but they are also sometimes deliberately targeted.

Most of the parties to conflict today are non-State actors who disregard humanitarian and international law. That situation should be dealt with first and foremost by the Governments concerned. We must not ignore the fact that armed conflicts are caused by a number of complex factors that cannot all be tackled from the same angle. Nor can we forget that arbitrary intervention will only complicate the situation and cause further harm to civilians.

Qatar reaffirms the importance of respecting the Charter and international law, given their role in strengthening international relations. They provide a framework for cooperation among States with a view to dealing with common challenge .

To date, the Security Council has adopted six presidential statements and three resolutions on the protection of civilians. Despite the progress made in the strengthening of such protection, our region, the Middle East, remains a particular case — one that the international community has not dealt with as it should. More than 50 civilians, including children, have been killed in the occupied Palestinian territories this month

alone. Even as we debate this issue, civilian populations are suffering as a result of attacks by the occupation forces. It goes without saying that we are extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population. The situation in Iraq is no better. Civilians are suffering as a result of terrorism — one of the most dangerous aspects of armed conflict.

Those two cases cast a shadow over the responsibility to protect civilians. Protection requires a set of appropriate actions, approaches and measures, which depend to a great extent on the conditions in a region and the stage of the conflict there. The only common factor is the suffering of civilians. We must be prudent and avoid applying a one-size-fits-all solution to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Prevention is better than cure. We must treat the symptoms, but, above all, we must deal with the root causes. Hence, we must develop policies aimed at promoting sustainable development in order to create coherent, strong societies and to strengthen cooperation and preventive diplomacy.

We need to take an approach that respects the current mechanisms that are in use, and we must implement such mechanisms in emergencies. We must also reactivate the role of the humanitarian organizations, while stressing the need for them to respect neutrality, objectivity and independence.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Egeland for his briefing, which contained up-to-date information about the state of affairs in the area of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That task requires systematic, coordinated measures at the international, regional and national levels. An effective response by the United Nations in cases of violence against civilians during armed conflict can play a decisive role in resolving crisis situations.

We fully share the thinking that Council decisions must be accompanied by actions aimed at improving the situation on the ground. It is important to ensure the implementation of instruments adopted by the Security Council on the protection of civilians, including those highlighting the problems of women and children. This requires an impartial, non-selective approach by members of the Council when considering such important issues, as well as strict observance of the principles of United Nations humanitarian activities.

Resolution 1674 (2006), adopted earlier this year, represents a development in the efforts of the Security Council in that area. It stresses the importance of preventing armed conflict, which, in our view, is a fundamental element. Key factors in that regard are coordination and a strict division of labour, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal instruments.

In the context of preventing violence, we attach great importance to preventing impunity and to bringing to justice all of those who are guilty of crimes against civilians including sexual violence, as reflected in several paragraphs of the resolution. In this connection, we note the role of peacekeeping missions in ensuring the protection of civilian populations from violence. Here, we would also like to stress the role of the International Criminal Court.

We profoundly regret that the deliberate targeting of civilians is continuing. The resolution stresses that such flagrant violations of international humanitarian law deserve the most firmist condemnation, as do other acts of violence, including, in particular, torture.

The use of regional and country approaches in trying to resolve problems relating to the protection of civilians in armed conflict is justified. In that connection, it is very important to take into account economic, social, historical, religious, cultural and other aspects specific to countries and regions, as well as the heterogeneous nature of each conflict, its causes and the ways of resolving it. Here, regional organizations can play a special role.

Resolution 1612 (2005) on the protection of children provided a new system-wide basis for the implementation of that task. As a result, we have launched a monitoring and reporting mechanism in that area and the working group of the Security Council on the subject has begun its work. We now need to make sure that they work effectively. We must ensure the objectivity and reliability of the information processed. Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security is still relevant, in particular in terms of ensuring equal opportunities for women to participate actively in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security and in decision-making.

In conclusion, I would like to say that humanitarian work is a key component of a comprehensive crisis-prevention and post-conflict strategy. That work must be based of the norms set out by the Charter of the United Nations and fundamental humanitarian principles. To a great extent, its success will depend upon how it is incorporated into the international community's efforts to bring about political resolutions to conflicts.

Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would first like to thank the delegation of Denmark for its initiative to organize this meeting during its presidency, which has provided an opportunity for the Security Council to express its views on a subject of great interest. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for the briefing on the protection of civilians in armed conflict he has just given us.

The issue of the protection of civilians has been on the agenda of the Security Council since 1999. We have come a long way in that time, with three resolutions having been adopted on the matter. Those resolutions have been referred to frequently by speakers who have taken the floor before me. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the Council's ongoing commitment to this issue. We also reiterate our support for all the measures envisaged in the resolutions that have been adopted.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the international community, including by the United Nations, the protection of civilians in armed conflict continues to be of major concern. Each year millions of people, particularly women and children, are the victims of deliberate attacks, forced displacement, sexual violence, forced recruitment, senseless killing, maiming, hunger, disease and the loss of their means of subsistence. Taken as a whole, this has taken a heavy toll on the victims of armed conflict.

In his last report, contained in document S/2005/740 and dated 28 November 2005, the Secretary-General deplored the absence of a multisectoral monitoring and reporting mechanism that would make it possible for the Council to identify priority areas and evaluate the results of its decisions. In that connection, the adoption of resolution 1674 (2006), on 28 April 2006, marked an important step, in that it provided for the establishment of a framework for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. My delegation recognizes the urgent need for the Council to move on to the implementation of its decisions by considering specific steps aimed at ensuring the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Among the efforts aimed at addressing the needs of civilians, we should urge all States that have not yet done so to ratify without delay the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and to implement all the relevant international legal instruments. To date, only half of the countries involved in armed conflict are parties to Optional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, which is the most relevant instrument relating to non-international conflicts.

We should also call for the ratification by all Member States of the Optional Protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

We must guarantee the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and of the staff of humanitarian organizations by creating the necessary security conditions for humanitarian protection activities.

We need to consider stronger measures in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

We need greater support for peacekeeping activities.

We must strengthen cooperation between international, regional and national organizations in order to protect displaced persons.

We must also put in place a multisectoral monitoring and follow-up mechanism to make it possible to collect all the information necessary as regards the protection of civilians in countries on the Council's agenda.

I cannot conclude without recalling the idea of the responsibility to protect, which was set out at the September 2005 World Summit. We strongly support that idea, for it is up to the parties to a conflict to guarantee access for humanitarian personnel to populations in need. My delegation also believes that the creation of a safe environment for people and groups at risk must continue to be a fundamental objective of peacekeeping operations. We also remain convinced that the best protection is to be found in

strict respect for international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and international human rights and criminal law.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the delegation of Argentina would like to thank you for having organized this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as for the document you have prepared in order to inform our deliberations. We would also like to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his briefing to the Council.

The end of the last century once again brought before the eyes of humankind the horrible realities of genocide, the atrocities of war and massive attacks against civilian populations. The Security Council reacted by placing this issue on its agenda and by creating a legal framework to address the matter through resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, namely resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000). At the same time, new concepts were discussed that questioned the idea of a State's absolute sovereignty in the face of the commission of horrifying criminal acts. Argentina participated in the elaboration of both resolutions and, in 2000, stated in the Council that the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States should be balanced against the principle of non-indifference to massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Five years thereafter, the United Nations produced two important decisions that reflected the evolution of this significant issue. First, the 2005 World Summit Outcome distilled the rich debate of previous years by adopting the concept of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In that document, our leaders indicated their readiness to take collective action in the Council, in a timely and decisive manner, against such grave situations.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict was the second significant development with regard to the issue. That resolution completed and updated the legal framework established by resolutions 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000).

Both elements, the responsibility to protect and the new Council resolution on the protection of civilians, mark the beginning of a new phase in the actions the international community should take in this area.

To date, the Council has followed up on the issue by holding semi-annual debates such as the one we are having today. It has also attempted to include the issue in the mandates of various missions.

After more than five years of following that approach, we believe that the Council should improve its mechanisms for addressing the subject on a regular basis and to that end consider the creation of a specific mechanism for the systematic follow-up of the protection of civilians in each of the situations on its agenda. That would allow an adequate and individualized evaluation of each case, facilitating the consideration of appropriate measures for each conflict on the basis of a list of options that could include, among others, the proposals formulated by Mr. Egeland. A mechanism with such characteristics would also entail greater interaction with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs regarding the information that the Council receives on this subject. That aspect has special importance, we believe, at the moment when civilians are first affected by a crisis, at which time the preventive actions that the Council may deploy play a very important role.

Such a mechanism would allow, in brief, a more integrated implementation of the provisions of resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006). In that regard, it is useful to recall that those resolutions also include provisions regarding the conditions in which the United Nations lends humanitarian assistance, such as those regarding access of humanitarian personnel to affected populations or the security of humanitarian personnel.

The idea of developing a mechanism for a case-by-case analysis on the basis of an initially thematic focus is not new and is already being successfully implemented in situations of children in armed conflicts.

In the case of protection for civilians, the consideration of such a mechanism could also represent an initial step towards the implementation of the final part of paragraph 138 of the outcome document of the 2005 summit, which indicates that the international community must support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability regarding the responsibility to protect.

Mr. Brencick (United States of America): We, too, thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his usual insightful and impassioned presentation to this Council.

In April of this year, the Council produced a thoughtful and comprehensive resolution recognizing the threats faced by civilians in armed conflict and condemning all acts of violence committed against unarmed and vulnerable populations in violation of applicable international law. In particular, resolution 1674 (2006) noted the dangers faced by women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons, who are all especially at risk in conflict. Resolution 1674 (2006) goes on to call for greater protection and appropriate assistance in order to address the needs of all affected civilian populations.

Unfortunately, the world continues to be plagued by multiple violent conflicts. This Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security; as part of that, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has currently been directed to support 18 peacekeeping and political missions where conflict has erupted. Many of those peacekeeping operations now have as part of their mandate the protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence.

In those situations of violent conflict, an important part of protecting civilian populations is to work quickly and efficiently to repair the damage already done and to do everything within our means to ensure that such conflict does not occur again. Nations emerging from conflict need our strong support in order to become fully functioning democratic societies, but we must also be cautious that they do not become completely dependent on the international community. For it is a fact that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with those nations and their Governments, and international efforts should only complement such Government efforts. Protecting civilians from the devastating effects of armed conflict depends largely not on what we do or say here, but on what Governments themselves do to protect their own people.

We must also continue to focus our efforts on the prevention of conflict itself. Civilians are now the major category of casualties in conflict worldwide. Even more critical are the signs that an unrepresentative and corrupt Government is in place. Demonstrated disregard for the rule of law, human rights, and basic democratic values, such as freedom, equality, transparency and the holding of free and fair elections, are all clear indications that political unrest may be festering. We are all aware of countries exhibiting those traits. What we as a Council choose to do about it in its earliest stages can make the difference between life and death for countless innocents.

Let me now turn to some specific cases of concern cited today. We continue to be gravely concerned about the ongoing crisis in Darfur, and especially about the impact of the conflict on civilians in that region. While in some areas the scale of violence has decreased, civilians continue to be directly targeted and more than 2 million remain displaced. In addition, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers have been increasingly targeted. That continuing insecurity has a direct and detrimental impact on the international community's ability to deliver assistance and provide basic services for the victims of the conflict. The situation in Darfur well illustrates the urgent role that States must play to safeguard civilians, including those who are internally displaced. It is also important to reiterate that internally displaced civilians living in camps are not always protected from serious human rights violations. Several other countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, face delicate situations of transition where serious protection challenges exist. United Nations peacekeeping and assistance missions, together with support from non-governmental organizations, must help to ensure that civilians in those regions are not denied the dividends of peace.

We are encouraged that the Security Council has been more consistent in addressing the regional dimensions of civilian protection. Resolution 1674 (2006) and recent mandates have highlighted the key issues that affect civilians in armed conflict, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, forced displacement, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international law, the need for unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to civilians in need of assistance, and the need to promote the safety of United Nations and associated humanitarian personnel. It is also clear, however, that we can and should do more.

As we once again reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and reinforcing the protection of

civilians in armed conflict, let us ensure that our words and intentions become action.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to thank the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, for his frank and comprehensive briefing. Mr. Egeland has told us that a peacekeeping operation will be judged according to its ability to protect, and we fully agree with that view.

One of the most effective measures that the Security Council should take to protect civilians is to include clear provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations to protect them. Indeed, where such mandates do not include any such provisions, the Security Council should adjust them so to provide them with specific norms on the protection of civilians. Moreover, the Security Council should request all peacekeeping missions to report at least once every six months on progress made in the implementation of resolutions on the protection of civilians, in particular resolution 1674 (2006).

My delegation believes that our thematic debate today on the protection of civilians in armed conflict will undoubtedly help us to assess the overall progress achieved under resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006). Nevertheless, I recall that the Security Council was created not to address issues abstractly or academically, but to resolve specific problems that undermine international peace and security.

For that reason, any discussion of protection of civilians in armed conflict obliges us to be precise and to speak of specific cases. In this instance, we are addressing Darfur, not only because of the persistent and flagrant violations of human rights and the lack of protection of civilians there, but because Darfur is a great challenge that the Security Council thus far has not been able to overcome. In the light of the recent visit by Council members to the region, we were able to see that despite earlier debates on the protection of civilians, such civilians still lack international protection.

The signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May has not yet provided a benefit in terms of the protection of the civilian population. That is visible and palpable when one visits camps for refugees or displaced persons. Moreover, the presence of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) has many limitations and has not been sufficient to deter attacks and violations of civilians' rights because of its low force level to date.

The attacks on the civilian population continue and there are problems for humanitarian access. Moreover, there are still cases of intimidation, harassment and human rights violations carried out by those who should be enforcing law and security. Displaced persons camps in Darfur and in Chad lack security, and people live under constant threat. This has prevented the return of displaced persons to their places of origin. Also, refugees in various areas of Chad live in precarious conditions with grave health, food and security problems. During our recent visit to Chad, we were able to witness such problems. President Deby indicated that his Government was not capable of protecting the refugee camps and urged the international community to guarantee such protection.

In the case of Darfur, my delegation believes that is urgent to give AMIS a robust mandate to enable it to protect civilians and at the end of this year to transfer its functions to a United Nations force with adequate capa[illegible] to protect civilians and implement the Darfur Peace Agreements. In this regard, given the current situation, the Security Council should maintain its firmest resolve to ensure that a United Nations force is deployed in Darfur. That resolve should be demonstrated by the Council through support for the important work of the Secretary-General and the heads of States of the African Union to bring about the deployment of a United Nations force and preparations for transferring the functions of AMIS to the new United Nations force, which should have a clear mandate to implement the peace agreements and, above all, to protect civilians, under Chapter VII of the Charter and international provisions that punish crimes against humanity.

My delegation believes that effective protection of civilians in armed conflict, and in particular in Darfur, will prove whether the Security Council is capable of bridging the gap between rhetoric and action in favour of the protection of civilians and against violations and crimes against humanity.

Finally, we would like to stress that the Security Council must also continue to support the activities of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court; its investigation will help to put an end

to the sense of impunity that currently prevails in Darfur.

Mrs. Telalian (Greece): We would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate on an issue which lies at the heart of the concerns of the international community. I wish also to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Ian Egeland, for his detailed presentation of recent problems and challenges concerning civilian protection. We support his recommendations.

Despite the many and persistent efforts of the United Nations in this field, the humanitarian situation in some parts of the world, such as Darfur in the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has not improved, and the civilian population continues to suffer massive and systematic human rights abuses.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, personally, and the various reports of the Secretary-General have highlighted the serious problem of grave human rights violations against civilians and vulnerable groups. Gender-based violence against women and girls, the forcible recruitment of children and child abduction continue to be major problems. As a result of this violence and the serious obstacles to the freedom of movement of humanitarian workers, thousands of people have been displaced or redisplaced, and on many occasions have been left with limited access to humanitarian aid.

In the past six years, the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict has gained prominence in the Security Council's decisions and discussions regarding the design of its peacekeeping operations in the field. The adoption last April of resolution 1674 (2006), on the initiative of the delegation of the United Kingdom, is indicative of the Council's determination to address this issue more consistently. The resolution addresses a range of key issues which are critical to the protection of civilians and which have a direct impact on durable peace and reconciliation. I would like to highlight some of those issues.

First, the resolution underlines the obligation of all parties to a conflict to strictly comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. We firmly believe that compliance with the international rule of law is the most effective guarantee of the safety of civilian populations. In that respect, we urge States which have not yet ratified all the treaties relating to the protection of civilians — and particularly the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 — to do so.

Secondly, the resolution emphasizes the importance of the State concerned ending impunity and of its obligation to prosecute those responsible for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. As impunity continues to be a major contributing factor to the worsening of humanitarian conditions in many conflict situations, States concerned should institute genuine criminal proceedings against those who commit such violations. In that respect, we would also like to underline the crucial role of international justice and reconciliation mechanisms, in particular, the International Criminal Court (ICC), in the pursuit of peace and justice. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to fully support the ICC in the accomplishment of its difficult mission in Darfur.

Thirdly, the resolution stresses the primary responsibility of States to maintain the security and the civilian character of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. It also mandates peacekeeping missions with the task of protecting civilians within their zone of operation. We fully support those provisions. In our view, if a State cannot provide such protection to civilians on its own territory, the Security Council should authorize the deployment of a robust peacekeeping mission to protect civilians, including refugees and internally displaced persons, from targeted attacks. The voluntary and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their villages should also be part of such protection. The mandates of peacekeeping missions should also provide for the protection of witnesses.

Fourthly, the resolution urges all those concerned to allow full and unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to civilians in need, and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel. Recent Security Council resolutions have incorporated such language. However, it is important that the United Nations develop a more coherent strategy to better implement these resolutions. Regular reassessment of the implementation of the protection mandates by peacekeeping operations, so as to reflect changing needs and priorities on the ground, is, in our view, an important requirement. More clarity

is also needed in interpreting those mandates into action, so that protection can be more effective. The tool of targeted sanctions, as part of the Council's holistic strategy in supporting peace agreements, is another means to protect civilians against those who seriously violate their human rights and freedoms.

Fifthly, the resolution underscores the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants in the protection of civilians affected by armed conflict. It is obvious that civilians will never be safe in conflict-affected areas unless the DDR processes is effectively dealt with. In that regard, the Council should ensure that in its current and future peacekeeping mandates there are provisions for effective measures for DDR.

We also believe that regional organizations can play a very important role in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That is particularly true for the African Union and its role in the Darfur crisis.

The adoption of resolution 1674 (2006) proves the commitment of the Security Council to ensure the safety of civilians during armed conflict and to provide a secure environment conducive to lasting peace and security. The Council should now implement those provisions in a more comprehensive and coherent manner in its current and future practice.

Mr. De La Sabliere (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for taking the initiative in organizing this debate. The protection of civilians is an issue which current events bring before us almost every day, and it is useful to stand back for some perspective at regular intervals. I also wish to thank Mr. Egeland for his remarks, which as always are very trenchant and useful.

Two months ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians, which endorses in particular the responsibility to protect. I applaud the perseverance of the United Kingdom in presenting and bringing that project to fruition, with the full support of my delegation. It is now time to examine how to implement this new roadmap for the protection of civilians.

Allow me, in that regard, to limit my comments to three simple ideas.

The protection of civilians has become an important element in how the action of the Security Council is perceived. Certain well-known studies have reported a drop in the number of conflicts in the world. However, it is clear that the number of refugees and displaced persons, and more generally the number of civilians in vulnerable situations, has not diminished — far from it. Fighting is often no longer one army against another but targets civilian populations considered close to the enemy, with no regard for the elementary principles of international humanitarian law. The credibility of Security Council action is therefore perceived to a large extent according to the degree of protection that civilians have in a given region, and not solely through the Council's capacity to impose a ceasefire or a peace agreement. The response to the crisis in Darfur is the obvious illustration of that.

Based on that observation, I draw two conclusions in terms of operations.

The first is that each time the mandate of an operation is revised we must ask ourselves about the protection of civilians in the field and what the United Nations can do to improve it. Most of the time, the Security Council must intervene in an extremely sensitive context, including the inability of the established authorities to ensure the protection of civilians — which is their primary responsibility — or ceasefire or peace agreements that are centred on power-sharing and neglect the fate of civilian populations.

Thus it is extremely important for the Council to take the opportunity of every mandate review to think about the balance between the force's missions and the state of protection of the people on the ground. There should never be a situation in which Blue Helmets helplessly watch the massacre of civilians a few hundred yards from their headquarters. While the assets allocated to the peacekeeping operations cannot be extended at will, on the other hand no one should doubt the resolve of the United Nations to protect all those who can be protected insofar as the capacities deployed on the ground permit. I believe that that concern is taken into greater account today by the Council, as can be seen, for example, in the changes made to the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

So we need to have a reflex — what I would term a protective reflex for civilians — to use in all aspects of an operation. MONUC's support to the International

Criminal Court investigators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one example of the actions of a peacekeeping operation assisting in the protection of civilians via the fight against impunity, which deserves to be emphasized.

The second conclusion, in terms of operations, is that we must integrate the protection of civilians in the Council's actions as far ahead of time as possible. Regularly adjusting mandates to the issues of civilian protection is the minimum that the Council can do. However, we must still do more, as far ahead of time as possible. First, we must press all the actors in a conflict to respect the sacrosanct nature of protecting civilians during their military actions and in all peace negotiations. If ceasefire agreements take the lot of civilians into proper account, then we are halfway there.

Secondly, when we draft the initial mandates, we must be very careful to ensure that the United Nations does not find itself in the situation of helplessness I have described while serious crimes are being committed against civilians. Thus it is essential that the initial mandates be realistic and clearly specify the responsibility of the United Nations but at the same time be commensurate with our duties vis-à-vis the victims. A peacekeeping operation must have the legal and military resources to discharge its mission to protect the civilian population. That will be essential when the Council decides on a resolution to relieve the African Union in Darfur.

Lastly, in order to succeed, the Security Council must rely on the entire United Nations family. Of course, it is Jan Egeland and his staff who are the first to line. But it is essential that the Department for Peacekeeping Operations be a co-manager in this dossier, along with the Department of Political Affairs. So, I hope that at our next meeting, Jan Egeland will not be alone in launching the debate.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Denmark.

Along with speakers before me, I would also like to thank Jan Egeland for his clear briefing on the current situation of civilians in armed conflict. Furthermore, I would like to fully associate my delegation with the statement to be delivered later by Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Our efforts to implement the established framework for the protection of civilians do not start in a vacuum. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has developed the ten-point platform with priorities for action and provided the Council with an aide memoire to assist in the development of protection mandates. It is time for us once again to evaluate the effectiveness of those tools. They might need to be updated, but in particular we need to make better use of them in the daily work of the Council.

Allow me to make a few comments on the way ahead as we see it.

The continued targeting of civilians in current situations of conflict is unacceptable. If States are unable or unwilling to provide protection for all — be it children, women, humanitarian workers or representatives of the free press — the international community must react to stop the pattern of violence. Local authorities clearly have an obligation to provide their full cooperation to facilitate those efforts. Physical protection, the restoration of law and order and the fight against impunity must be key priorities in bringing the violence to an end.

Humanitarian access is essential. Assistance and protection activities must be provided as promptly as practically possible. Consequently, the Security Council must take all steps to ensure full, safe and unhindered access for United Nations and humanitarian personnel. Denial of, and attacks on, humanitarian operations are unacceptable and must be met with the appropriate response.

Efforts to protect civilians in situations of conflict must be more predictable, timely and systematic. In emerging conflict situations, the Security Council should establish an effective peacekeeping presence as early as possible. Peacekeepers should be provided with a realistic, clear and robust mandate to protect civilians and to provide a secure environment. That includes providing security in and around camps for refugees and internally displaced persons.

To improve our efforts to protect civilians, all actors must continue to deepen their cooperation. Within the United Nations system we encourage further cooperation among the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and other relevant actors to follow up on the decisions of the Security Council. In that regard, we believe that the establishment of the cluster approach will improve the humanitarian response and the protection of civilians.

Finally, we must improve our ability to engage with non-State actors to make it clear that all those engaged in armed conflicts have an obligation to refrain from attacks on civilians. In this effort, it is important that not only representatives of the United Nations system, but also members of civil society, be actively involved. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has its own distinct role in that regard. We are hopeful that the introduction of the new ICRC emblem, the Red Crystal, will enhance the protection of the civilian population during armed conflicts. We also welcome the very useful guidelines just issued by OCHA on humanitarian negotiations with armed groups.

The protection of civilians is a multifaceted challenge, and the Security Council has the tools to solve only parts of the problem. But we must make the best use of those tools and not shy away, even if the situation calls for more difficult measures, such as sanctions, the referral of violators to international courts or the stronger enforcement of protection mandates.

It is our hope that today's debate will enforce steps already taken to implement Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) and that it will inspire new initiatives to find ways to ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Carl (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and the countries that align themselves with this statement. I shall limit myself to highlighting the most salient points of the statement, which is being distributed to members.

I wish to thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to discuss this important issue and for the useful paper you distributed. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his informative briefing. The European Union welcomes the sustained attention paid by the Security Council to this issue, as well as the holding of semi-annual open debates.

At the 2005 World Summit, our heads of State and Government underlined that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a concern of the international community. A number of important decisions and commitments have been taken. Most important was the historic agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which was reaffirmed by resolution 1674 (2006), adopted by the Council on 28 April this year.

Prevention is critical. The Security Council plays an important role in that regard. With timely and accurate information, the Council can and should act as early as possible in a conflict situation in order to most effectively protect civilians at risk. Timely briefings by the Secretary-General, his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and other relevant humanitarian actors are important. We welcome the joint initiative of various United Nations agencies to develop a systematic data-collection mechanism. Establishing the capacity to collate all necessary information concerning the protection of civilians — along with the collation of information about protection incidents in countries of concern to the Council — will prove essential in ensuring a clear focus on protection that can be reflected throughout the Council's work and deliberations.

The European Union is concerned at the denial to humanitarian personnel of full and unimpeded access to civilians in need of assistance, in particular when such denial is used as a political tool and weapon of war. We are equally concerned at the increased risks that United Nations and associated civilian personnel are facing on the ground. We urge all parties to allow full and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance and to take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel and of their assets. We also call upon all States and parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law and to respect the neutrality, independence and impartiality of humanitarian actors. We commend the International Committee of the Red Cross for its efforts to promote full observance of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

With regard to protection, it is imperative that United Nations peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions be given adequately strong mandates to that effect, as well as the necessary means to implement them.

Protection from physical and sexual violence remains one of the major challenges of civilian protection. We therefore encourage the Council to live up to its commitment to undertake to ensure that all peace support operations employ all feasible measures to prevent such violence and to address its impact where it takes place. United Nations peacekeeping and peace support operations and associated personnel have a particular responsibility in their own conduct in that regard. The European Union welcomes the zero-tolerance policy that has been introduced by the United Nations and has adopted the same standards in its own European security and defence policy operations.

Impunity needs to be addressed more forcefully. The restoration of law and order to prevent further violence and tackle impunity should be a priority for the States concerned, for the Security Council and for all peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Together with the Secretary-General, we urge Member States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute, as well as to the treaties of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and to take all appropriate measures to fully implement those treaties within national systems, including ensuring proper investigation and prosecution of any violations of the relevant rules.

The special protection needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as of women and children, need to be adequately addressed. Peacekeeping missions need to have the mandates and the resources to guarantee that their special needs will be met — for example, by providing security in and around camps for displaced persons.

The easy availability and the destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons pose a particular challenge for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Small arms and light weapons account for more deaths worldwide than any other type of weapon. Our common work in this field has just begun. That is why the European Union insists on the need for a structured follow-up to the Small Arms Review Conference and for renewed, concerted efforts by all those Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society and international organizations alike — who want to put an end to the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict has become an increasingly complex challenge. But that complexity cannot be allowed to diminish in any way our collective efforts to effectively address this horrific state of affairs.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Rivas (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, we wish to thank you for having convened this debate, and we commend you on the way in which you have been guiding the work of the Security Council this month. Likewise, we wish to thank Mr. Jan Egeland for his briefing. I wish in this respect to mention the reference made by Mr. Egeland to Colombia. We thank him and the United Nations system in general for their continued concern about our country and its people.

The Government of Colombia is very much aware of the complex situation facing the Colombian people. The displacement situation is caused by illegal armed groups combined with the global problem of illicit drugs. Colombia is firmly committed to tackling those factors that give rise to violence and poverty and lead to insecurity among the national population. The Government is working tirelessly to find comprehensive solutions in addition to the temporary measures required by the affected population, which we have been implementing.

The national Government does not believe that the Colombian population can be divided into groups or categories, just as it cannot be divided under international humanitarian law. Thus we have created programmes that benefit the entirety of the affected population. In this context, we would like to reaffirm that the valuable work being done by the International Committee of the Red Cross should be the norm and not the exception when it comes to humanitarian assistance and humanitarian activities.

In recent years, Colombia has devoted significant resources to devising solutions for the problems facing its affected population. Moreover, we are working with the international community and with the United Nations system, which has a broad presence in our country. We believe that the most important thing is for

the United Nations to work with the Government and not in parallel with it, since its work must complement national efforts aimed at putting an end to the situation of the Colombian population affected by violence.

Furthermore, the Government faces the tremendous challenge of reintegrating the more than 40,000 people demobilized from illegal armed groups and who need opportunities to start a new life. We have rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for former combatants who are minors. We have been the beneficiary of significant and valuable cooperation from a number of Governments and from the Organization of American States.

We are clear in our minds about the reality of our situation and the challenges we face. We are working day by day to find lasting solutions that will alleviate the situation of the Colombian people affected by violence. We would also like to reaffirm our resolve to work through cooperation and in complementarity with the United Nations system and with the international community, as we have been doing in recent years.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Human Security Network, namely Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand, Slovenia and the observer country of South Africa.

Let me begin by thanking the Danish presidency of the Security Council for having organized this open debate, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, for his presentation and in particular his recommendations on possible practical measures to strengthen our collective ability to protect civilians.

After the publication of last year's report of the Secretary-General, the States of the Network look forward with great interest to the coming report, due next year. Violence in internal armed conflicts in various parts of the world continues disproportionately to affect the civilian population and often forcibly displaces them. The suffering of civilians caught in armed conflict remains one of the most disturbing features of armed conflicts, constituting a major challenge to peace and security. We are also more aware today of the effects on the civilian population of the societal breakdown accompanying armed conflict.

We are particularly concerned about the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, which increase armed violence, endanger the security of civilians and jeopardize development activities aimed at stabilizing post-conflict societies. Urgent measures are needed to reverse the cycle of violence and its effects on civilian populations caused by small arms and light weapons. In that regard, we would like to draw the attention of the Council to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development of 7 June 2006, which contains a set of recommendations on how to tackle armed violence.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome document affirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Network is committed to further promoting the understanding of the notion of "responsibility to protect". We welcome the Council's reaffirmation of paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. We encourage the Security Council to devise appropriate implementation mechanisms in that respect. Furthermore, we encourage the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from exercising their veto powers with regard to the aforementioned four international crimes.

We would also like to underline the fact that the responsibility to protect is a continuum that ranges from prevention to protection and rebuilding. In this regard, we welcome the Council's emphasis on prevention and the need for a comprehensive approach involving the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for and protection of human rights. With regard to the challenge of rebuilding, we welcome the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, which met for the first time last week, and the role it can play in facilitating the transition from relief to development towards sustainable peace.

As members of the Human Security Network, we fully support the mandate of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide. His work and cooperation with the various actors involved on the ground is important for collecting early and solid data that can better inform our preventive efforts as well as provide the basis for bringing relevant situations to the attention of the Security Council. We

encourage the Security Council to strongly support this mechanism, working towards the actual prevention of violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law.

The Security Council's role in addressing civilian protection as a component of its peace and security responsibilities is now well established and was reinforced by the Outcome Document. The Council must continue to explore how it can best and most effectively respond to violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law. It is also important that the Council aim at achieving consistency of practice in upholding its responsibilities under the Charter so as to enhance the predictability and transparency of its work.

In order for the Council to set realistic objectives for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Council must first and foremost be well informed. The practice of sending Council missions to affected regions and countries is commendable. The Council can also benefit from regular briefings by other relevant actors within the United Nations system, including the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide; the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons; and pertinent United Nations agencies, as well as other important implementing humanitarian partners.

The ongoing strengthening of the field presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should contribute significantly to translating United Nations decisions and basic humanitarian and human rights norms into improved local realities and partnerships with local actors. Well-informed decisions contribute to the necessary clarity of protection mandates that are tailored to the specific needs of the situation on the ground. The Council also must pay particular attention to basing its decision-making on all relevant principles, norms and standards of humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

In order to protect civilian populations and to alleviate their plight, the Network calls on States and on non-State armed actors to ensure safe and unimpeded access to affected populations by humanitarian actors. We welcome in this regard the adoption in December 2005 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which greatly contributes to the effective work of humanitarian agencies and organizations on the ground, which is indispensable.

We welcome the current reforms to enhance the timeliness, predictability and effectiveness of the global humanitarian response system, including through the expanded Central Emergency Response Fund, as well as efforts to strengthen humanitarian coordination capacity, to improve needs assessments and to ensure accountable sector coordination, preparedness and response. Those reform efforts are mutually reinforcing and should result in better cooperation among agencies with a view to avoiding gaps in meeting the protection needs of affected populations, including, in particular, those of the internally displaced.

Compliance by all parties to a conflict with international law is an essential guarantee for ensuring the safety of the civilian population.

The fight against impunity is essential for enabling war-affected societies to come to terms with their past and move towards reconciliation and sustainable peace. It is the obligation of all States to prevent impunity through the adoption of national laws, policies and programmes and the effective functioning of the justice system. Furthermore, the work of international or mixed tribunals and, in particular, of the International Criminal Court, is proving to be valuable when justice cannot be achieved at the national level. It is of the utmost importance that national and international criminal justice institutions receive all necessary support on the ground.

We have noted in previous open debates in the Security Council the alarming and pervasive nature of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas. Women and children constitute the majority of the civilian population and are therefore particularly affected by conflict. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was a response to the fact that women's experiences in conflict situations are marginalized to an unacceptable degree. Sexual violence is repeatedly used as a deliberate method of warfare with frightening persistence. In some contexts, such sexual violence has led to an increase in the transmission of HIV/AIDS, with devastating results. More action is required to document and report on

those matters so that effective preventive measures and remedies can be put in place. It is a significant development in combating sexual violence as a method of warfare that rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and forced pregnancy have been included in the definition of crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. But more must be done.

Children are particularly vulnerable in situations of armed conflict and are often targeted for abduction and recruitment into armed groups. We welcome the work of the newly created Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts and encourage the effective implementation of resolution 1612 (2005).

Let me conclude by saying that we should keep in mind our common responsibility to act in a timely, proactive and decisive manner in order to prevent further suffering.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Since the Council last held an open debate on this topic six months ago, resolution 1674 (2006) has been adopted. Many of us had asked for such a resolution during that earlier debate. We commend the Council for having produced a text that contains many crucial elements for the further improvement of the international protection regime for civilians in armed conflict. The recognition that the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons and the commission of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in armed conflict may constitute a threat to international peace and security is a very welcome statement. However, we would have welcomed clear language on the role that the Council is willing to assume with regard to the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as on mechanisms for implementation, in accordance with the World Summit Outcome document.

While the Council acknowledged that there are a number of national and international justice and reconciliation mechanisms that can be instrumental in ending impunity, we were disappointed to note that the resolution does not contain a reference to the vital role that the International Criminal Court is playing in this respect. Such a reference would have updated and strengthened the resolution in a manner that would have taken into account the major relevant developments since 2000, including the referral of a situation to the International Criminal Court by the Council itself.

Important developments have also taken place with regard to the quality of the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations affected by armed conflict. The modernization of the Central Emergency Response Fund and the establishment of clear leadership functions within the United Nations system for prompt and coordinated humanitarian action will significantly contribute to ensuring more predictable humanitarian financing and to enhancing the overall response capacity.

In order to have the intended impact on the ground, such improvements in the operational tools must be supported, however, by the recognition of the right of affected civilians to humanitarian assistance and the acceptance of secure and prompt access for humanitarian organizations and workers by all parties to a conflict, as well as by neighbouring countries, where needed. It is with that purpose that the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence must be understood and applied.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the subject also pointed out that a prompt and predictable humanitarian response can bring sustainable relief to civilians caught in an armed conflict only when there is a political solution to the conflict. We therefore welcome the efforts of the Secretariat to strengthen the United Nations good-offices capacity, including in its mediation activities. It is clear that the effectiveness of the protection of civilians can be significantly enhanced if the mandates of peacekeeping operations are drafted in a clear manner that takes into account the specific needs of civilians in a particular situation.

There is a continuing need to give special attention to the situation of internally displaced persons. It is estimated that more than 25 million people worldwide have been forced to flee their homes — mostly as a result of armed conflict — without crossing an international border. Such people often live under the most difficult and trying conditions. The issue of internal displacement is a complex one. It is not merely a humanitarian

problem — although, of course, it has a strong humanitarian component. There must, however, be an integrated and comprehensive approach to internal displacement, and more conceptual work is needed on issues such as the prevention of displacement and the question of when internal displacement ends. We appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in this respect and commend the work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Professor Walter Kälin.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rock (Canada): On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like first to thank you, Madam, and the Government of Denmark, not only for a very focused and productive presidency during a very busy and challenging month, but also for having brought us here today for this open discussion on a matter of such significance.

Canada would also like to thank and acknowledge the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, not only for his briefing today, but also for the consistent and courageous leadership that he has shown on the issue of the protection of civilians throughout his term of office.

I know that the members of the Council are aware, perhaps more than anyone else, that the protection of civilians is not an abstract political or legal concept. As members of the Council have seen for themselves during their field visits, on any given day in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Darfur, Colombia or Sri Lanka, Haiti or northern Uganda, protection can mean a world of difference to the men, women and children who are in need of it. It can mean being able to venture beyond their settlements to collect firewood without fear of sexual assault by armed militia. It can mean children being able to sleep with their families at night rather than travelling miles to seek shelter to avoid forced recruitment. It can mean that families can maintain their livelihoods and property because they have not become displaced or dispossessed. For those living in occupied territories, it can mean that their rights under international humanitarian law will be respected. For those who want to shop or pray or simply go about their daily business, it can mean that they will not be deliberately targeted for terrorist attack.

The protection of civilians during and after armed conflict is achieved through a set of actions — tangible and practical. Some of those actions can be provided by one's family and community. But critically, in so far as the Council is concerned, legal and physical protection must be ensured by one's State and, of course, supplemented by the international community as a whole. The Security Council's direct role in the protection of civilians as part of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security is now well established. In this Chamber, Council members have repeatedly pledged that they and the wider international community will take steps to improve civilian protection, as they did again this April with resolution 1674 (2006). For its part, the Government of Canada will continue to monitor the implementation by the Council of its commitments, including in country-specific contexts, and to support work that enhances Council and wider international efforts to respond appropriately to the needs of civilians who may be at risk.

Canada welcomes the Council's intention stated in resolution 1674 (2004), to give priority to civilian protection components in multidimensional peace operations, as well as the Council's strong statements related to the need to address sexual and gender-based violence. We were pleased indeed to see the endorsement of the concept of the responsibility to protect.

We would like to ensure that the Council maintains its strong support for humanitarian access, which has been a critical issue in northern Uganda, Somalia and Darfur, and that the Council will consider appropriate actions when such access is deliberately obstructed. In addition, consistent with resolution 1296 (1999), we believe that efforts in relation to the question of the security of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons must not be limited only to existing peacekeeping operations. That issue is proving to be a key challenge in Chad, where the Council must consider concretely what can and should be done to address insecurity for the displaced in eastern Chad, as it impacts on Darfur, and of course vice versa.

While resolution 1674 (2006) was welcome, efforts to advance the subject must continue. Today, Canada would like briefly to look forward and to

identify what might be the Council's next steps in strengthening that protection.

First, there must be a more proactive response to situations where civilians are at risk, including the use of good offices, envoys, monitoring missions and preventive deployments to act as a deterrent.

Secondly, there must be support for humanitarian and human rights agencies through strong and consistent Council resolutions and advocacy, promoting compliance with international law and helping to create an enabling environment.

Thirdly, the Council must continue its vital periodic field visits so that it can raise civilian protection issues in the very places where civilians are struggling to survive. We welcome the emphasis placed by the Council mission to the Sudan on the need for a robust United Nations mandate for Darfur to protect civilians in its discussions with the Government in Khartoum.

Fourthly, there must be zero tolerance for impunity as regards the implementation of Security Council decisions. The Council should outline specific actions, with time lines and benchmarks for parties to a conflict, and then monitor their implementation, ready to apply penalties when actions are not taken.

Fifthly, there must be strategic use of targeted sanctions to deter attacks on civilians. There must also be enforcement and monitoring of those measures when they are employed.

Sixthly, we must develop criteria to guide the use of force where diplomatic efforts do not prove successful in preventing gross and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Lastly, until those criteria on the use of force are adopted, the Council should focus on the design and use of tailored and robust multidimensional mandates for civilian protection where a physical international presence is required, backed up by the necessary means and capabilities and with follow-up on those mandates once they are adopted and missions are in the field.

The key to the Council's success in acting early on threats to civilians is its access to good data on what is occurring on the ground. The Secretariat and agencies in the field have a crucial role to play in furnishing that evidence. Gathering it will be facilitated by the welcome creation of the new standing protection deployment mechanism by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and by the completion, in the coming months, of a standardized civilian protection monitoring and reporting mechanism for use by country teams. Canada has been pleased to contribute to both. Better information will also assist with mission planning, an area where continued improvements by the Secretariat are needed and where cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the United Nations and regional organizations is key.

(spoke in French)

Member States, including those that are members of the Security Council, must demonstrate their willingness to ensure that populations at risk have access at all times to the greatest protection possible, that perpetrators of abuse are held accountable for their actions and that rights advocacy, monitoring and capacity-building become the watchwords of our efforts. The circumstances in which the protection of civilians must take place are complex and represent a formidable challenge for the United Nations and Governments, but one that can and must be met. The words spoken in this Chamber alone will not make that agenda a reality. Instead, concrete steps and the willingness to make flexible and pragmatic use of all the leverage available to us will enable us to meet our responsibility to vulnerable people and groups. The Security Council can count on Canada's support and encouragement as we work together to respond to those enormous challenges.

(spoke in English)

As I will be leaving my post to return to Canada on Friday, this is the last opportunity on which I will have the honour and privilege to address the Council. May I say, in departing, how very much I have appreciated these periodic opportunities to communicate directly to the Council the views and proposals that Canada wishes to put forward with respect to the Council's vital work. Please, Madam President, accept my expressions of gratitude and deep respect, as well as my warmest best wishes to the Council.

The President: On behalf of the members of the Council I would like to thank the representative of Canada for his many valuable inputs to the Council's deliberations during his tenure in New York. We wish him all the best.

I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Allow me, at the outset, to express my appreciation to you, Madam President, for holding this important meeting to discuss a sensitive issue related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We also wish to thank Mr. Jan Egeland for his informative briefing.

My delegation has examined the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2005/740). We agree with the Secretary-General in stressing the importance of the international community's commitment to better address the tragic plight of civilians living in situations of armed conflict and of our taking stock of developments, assessing the collective achievements that have been made and reflecting on those areas where action remains inadequate.

While we appreciate the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, which concentrates on the protection of civilians — including measures to be adopted by the concerned parties to the conflict and the international community — we believe that the factors that contribute to armed conflicts should receive similar or even greater consideration. Addressing those factors comprehensively would prevent the eruption of armed conflict. One of the most important means for preventing the emergence of armed conflicts lies in our capacity to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, respect and protect human rights, enhance political dialogue, and promote the principle of tolerance and national reconciliation. We hope that the Peacebuilding Commission will play a vital role in that regard.

The report of the Secretary-General and Mr. Egeland's briefing refer to Iraq, and we would like to highlight the suffering of innocent civilians there. We have to recognize that Iraq has become one of the main fronts in the fight against terrorism. Regardless of the reasons behind terrorist operations in Iraq, the common factor in the majority of those operations is that the victims are innocent civilians. The terrorist operations have started to take a more destructive and dangerous approach by targeting civilians in an attempt to provoke a civil war in Iraq.

The terrorist acts that are taking place in Iraq have reached a level that cannot be justified by or accepted under any reason or pretext. The number of deaths from violence and terrorism during the past five months has grown to more than 6,000, representing civilians from all sectors of society. Violence and terrorism have also targeted the infrastructure, water and power supplies, hospitals, oil pipelines, United Nations staff and diplomatic personnel, women and children, doctors and engineers, and even retired civil servants who were recently murdered in a terrorist attack while they gathered to receive their retirement pension.

The brutality of the terrorist operations perpetrated by terrorists in Iraq led the Security Council to adopt resolution number 1618 (2005), in which it strongly condemned terrorist operations in Iraq, including the killing of more than 32 children in one suicide terrorist act that was considered to be a threat to international peace and security. It also strongly urged all Member States to prevent the transit of terrorists to and from Iraq, the provision of arms to terrorists, and financing that would support terrorists. It also emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation among all countries in the region, especially those neighbouring Iraq.

It is not possible for a single State to confront terrorism on its own, and that applies to Iraq more than to any other country. While we realize the importance of international cooperation in combating terrorism, however, regional cooperation remains the cornerstone of efforts to eliminate that phenomenon.

As members of the Council know, Iraq set some strategic goals to stop the violence and defeat the terrorists following the formation of its Government, constitutionally elected for a full four-year mandate. As a good-will initiative, the Government recently released 2,500 detainees for whom there was no proof of their involvement in committing crimes. The Government has also presented a reconciliation plan consisting of 24 articles in which it offers an olive branch to all Iraqi people to peacefully participate in the political process, abandon violence, and start building and reconstructing the country. The plan also includes an amnesty for all those who have not been involved in terrorist acts or committed crimes against humanity or war crimes. It also includes the prohibition of human rights violations, allows for the punishment of those involved in torturing detainees, and permits international organizations to visit Iraqi prisons and to check up on the condition of prisoners.

Moreover, internally displaced persons are to return to their homes, and the Government, in cooperation with the security forces, will assume responsibility for their protection from terrorists and insurgents and compensate them for the damages they have suffered. The question of displaced persons is currently under discussion in the Iraqi Council of Representatives in an attempt to find an appropriate solution. Furthermore, in its continuing efforts to unify the Iraqi people so that they may live peacefully in a democratic, unified and federal Iraq, the Government is also making preparations to host a national reconciliation conference under the auspices of the Arab League in August this year.

While the aforementioned measures will contribute to the prevention of violence and terrorism in Iraq, they will also constitute the main pillars of the Government's plan to eliminate the suffering of civilians, who are the main victims of acts of violence and terrorism in Iraq.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I shall be extremely brief and make only one point, but before doing so I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Egeland for his usual concern about the fate of civilians caught in armed conflict, and also to register my thanks to him for the good working relationship existing between his Department and the Government of Uganda in an effort to address the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda.

In Uganda, we view the deliberate targeting of civilians in armed conflict as totally unacceptable regardless of the motivation, be it the fight for freedom or otherwise.

The international community must therefore resolve to fight that menace. For a long time, the people of northern Uganda have been the victims of vicious attacks perpetrated by the so-called Lord's Resistance Army. There is nothing of the Lord about it; the apt description should perhaps be "Satanic army". Under their leader, Joseph Kony, they have cut off people's limbs and lips, abducted and defiled children, and committed all manner of atrocities. For some time, they were regarded as a Ugandan affair, until recently when they started committing the same atrocities in the southern Sudan. Because of military pressure by Uganda's armed forces, with the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan, most of them have been flushed out of the Sudan and have relocated to Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have thus become a regional threat. In Uganda, they have been defeated. There are a few remnants on the run, but unless something is done to arrest and disarm them in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they may regroup and pose a threat again.

The United Nations, together with the countries of the region concerned, should act to arrest especially those who have been indicted by the International Criminal Court. The rest could be encouraged to take advantage of the amnesty which is in place in Uganda.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are gratified to be able to attend the second open debate convened during your presidency this month, Madam, to follow up on the topic of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and in particular the implementation of resolution 1674 (2006), adopted only two months ago today.

We are grateful for the information provided and the reference document prepared for this discussion, as well as the relevant information provided by Mr. Jan Egeland on the current situation and specific recommendations to ensure the appropriate implementation of resolution 1674 (2006).

For Guatemala, today's debate represents progress in implementation in that it affords us a good opportunity to focus attention in our work on the challenges of implementation on the ground and to review lessons learned and progress achieved. In our view, holding semi-annual debates to promote intergovernmental dialogue on the issue is an extremely useful practice.

I will try briefly to share some ideas that my delegation wishes to highlight. Of course, we must keep in mind that there are no preconceived formulae and that every case deserves to be considered according to its circumstances and particular features.

First of all, it seems to us that particular attention needs to be given to the active role that could be played by the civilian population affected themselves. That is especially crucial in the phases immediately after the crisis when communities become the primary actors in their own recovery and development in the

long term. Their participation is essential in helping to salvage what remains of the community, in promoting reconstruction of the social fabric and in supporting reintegration of permanently displaced persons in host communities.

In this regard, and secondly, it seems to us therefore that if we are to set realistic objectives with which all actors participating in the efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict can identify, we must promote dialogue among all interested parties and establish institutions which will enable them to interact, thus securing better participation for all in keeping with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

That brings me to the third point that my delegation wishes to stress and which has to do with improved coordination and cooperation among all actors. On this point, Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) reaffirms the importance of continuing the practice of including in all peacekeeping missions mandates concerning the protection of civilians, giving them priority and ensuring their implementation. The resolution offers the opportunity to continue to improve the design of the assistance provided by the United Nations. My delegation believes that such design should ensure incorporation of mandates that tackle the specific needs of protection and the post-conflict environment in which proper value and consideration should be given to the work of the programmes carried out by the United Nations funds, agencies and programmes. The establishment of a multisectoral mechanism with the capacity to systematically compile data and information on the protection of civilians, we agree, is an extremely useful tool.

As a fourth point, my delegation would like to highlight the importance of recognizing the powerful contribution and leadership role of women as well as boy and girl children, not only in reconstruction, but in the processes of mediation and reconciliation. It is unfortunate that sexual violence, trafficking and maiming often inflicted on them do not allow us to see them other than as victims. However, women are agents of change who, in cases such as that of Guatemala, have been able to shape opportunities for the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as to contribute to peacebuilding processes. For their part, children and young people are the future of a society and the building of stable societies based in a culture of peace will depend on them.

Not far from this Chamber the United Nations is hosting the conference to review progress made in the implementation of the programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. For this reason, as my fifth and last point, my delegation wishes to highlight the need to take measures to strengthen controls over the acquisition and possession by civilians of small arms and light weapons, with a view, among other things, to preventing the diversion of legally acquired weapons to the illicit market. It is plain that these weapons not only cause damage to civilians but also present a danger for humanitarian workers. It seems to us that that is a topic that the Security Council, given its mandate, should act on in a resolute way. It is our responsibility, our shared responsibility, to protect.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Egeland to respond to the comments and questions raised.

Mr. Egeland: I sincerely want to thank Council members for all their expressions of support and the reaffirmation of the commitment to the protection of civilians that we have heard today.

I think the Security Council has truly made great progress in its work to protect civilian populations in the past couple of years. The Council has probably done more than any Security Council before you ever in this regard. Peacekeeping missions are better, their mandates are better, there is more support for the work of protecting civilians, and there is more response in the Security Council to our proposals, our ideas and our appeals as humanitarian workers on the frontlines of humanity.

There has also been a rich selection of proposals from Council members and from other Member States. Ambassador Allan Rock again made a number of valuable points on behalf of Canada, as he has in many of his previous presentations. And so have all the others. We have taken careful note of them and they will be important for us as we develop and draft further reports to the Secretary-General and come back to the Council with more proposals.

I think the Council can be proud of what has happened in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, South Sudan, Angola, and of the progress that we are making

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). What I have tried to do today, and what we have tried to do in our drafting the Secretary-General's report, is to say that we need to be more predictable, because I have also mentioned a number of countries' situations where we are not seeing the same progress. We should be equally predictable in our solidarity and in our protection of women, children and civilians under threat everywhere.

It comes at a critically important time, and it comes at a time where there is a new Security Council resolution. That is a new opportunity for us. It also comes at a time when force commanders, more than ever before, want and are asking for help to protect civilian populations. Force commanders need more resources, more tailor-made resources and clear guidance on how to actually undertake protection when facing threats of imminent violence. We owe them our help so as to enable them to protect civilians under attack around them.

I am grateful today for the recognition by many speakers of the need for Security Council mandates and the United Nations peacekeeping missions to reflect more realistically protection needs on the ground. I look forward to working more closely with Security Council members and with my colleagues in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and in the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) to achieve this fine-tuning of our responses to the various countries' situations. Importantly, speakers have today also proposed that reporting on the implementation of the provisions of resolution 1674 (2006) should be included in the reports of the Secretary-General in reference to concrete country situations. That will indeed be a very important reality check for all of us.

The representatives of Japan and Argentina, among others, also proposed that a matrix be prepared clarifying roles, responsibilities and timelines for carrying out protection activities in peacekeeping missions. I believe that that would serve as a valuable tool in clarifying what actions should be taken, by whom and when, so that we all can be accountable.

I thank delegations who have reiterated today the grave concerns of the international community over the failure to adequately protect civilians who continue to suffer in Darfur and elsewhere. We need to have significant breakthroughs in Darfur; we need to have breakthroughs in Eastern Chad and elsewhere.

As humanitarian workers, we have probably gone further than ever before into dangerous terrain, and that was gratefully acknowledged by members of the Council. If we are left alone in Darfur or elsewhere, our personnel would be in impossible situations and it would immediately lead to a paralysis of life-saving operations. The next weeks and months will be crucial in deciding whether we go from the present situation of totally inadequate protection or whether we can move on to a more predictable peacekeeping situation in Darfur and elsewhere.

For our part, I would like to reiterate that OCHA will give all possible support to Council members as they take the protection agenda further forward. Our collective hope must be that we find new, more creative ways to place civilians at the heart of our actions as the United Nations, in more coherent and comprehensive planning, in activating our good offices and in ensuring effective political mediation everywhere.

It is our collective responsibility to provide protection to civilians, who continue to bear the brunt of conflict, and I hope that the next time we come back we can report further progress. But all of us must work very hard in the coming months.

The President: I thank Mr. Egeland for his clarifications.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list, and I thank all participants in the debate. We have done it within three hours.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.